

But then the stimulus bullet train turned into a rickety stage coach here in the Senate. When it got right down to it, Senate Democrats couldn't do what House Democrats had done. They couldn't resist—not even one time—a chance to play politics.

If Americans are wondering why their checks aren't in the mail, they can find it in last week's news clips. Of particular interest is an AP story entitled "Politics Creeps into Stimulus Package." Democrats are holding onto the stimulus bill, the article said, not to speed up the rebate checks, but to try to make Republicans look bad in November. Asked about the amendments we were expecting to take up this week, the senior Senator from New York said, "It's tough votes for them." It's tough votes for them.

Now, the same AP article also helpfully points out that the senior Senator from New York is no sideline observer in this debate. It notes that he moonlights as chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. For people outside the beltway, that means he is in charge of recruiting and helping Democrat candidates for the Senate—which, this week, according to the AP, evidently involves holding up the stimulus bill over votes he thinks will help his candidates against Republicans in November.

Now I don't know if the thrust of this article was entirely accurate. But if it was, these are precisely the kind of shenanigans Americans had been hoping we could get past this year. And, frankly, Senate Republicans were hopeful after the speed with which the House approved its version of the growth package that Senate Democrats would also see the wisdom in coming together to deliver relief in a timely manner.

It's disappointing that politics would come to play a part in a deal that seemed refreshingly free from it for a change. But unfortunately, it seems the never-ending campaign that tainted so much of last year's Senate business has carried over to this year.

Last night, my good friend the majority leader suggested that Republicans were delaying action on the stimulus plan because we asked for some time to review his latest proposal—a full 4 days after he said he would deliver it. Never mind that passage of the Senate Democrats' bill forces a conference, worsening an already-prolonged process. Never mind that once we did take a look, we noticed an extra \$1 billion in spending, which I think most Americans would consider a significant addition. And never mind that our friends on the other side had no intention of voting on the package today anyway.

We could have disposed of this stimulus package a week ago, but our Democratic colleagues wanted, as they said, to put their "stamp" on it.

Mr. President, I don't think Americans care one bit whether this bill has a Republican or a Democratic stamp on

it. They are completely fed up with political gotcha. Americans want—and deserve—results.

Taxpayers will get their rebate checks and businesses will get their much-needed relief, but not without having to watch a show here for a few more days or a week—put on for the sake of a depressingly familiar political circus.

That is unacceptable to Republicans. I presume it is unacceptable to the 385 Democrats and Republicans who voted the stimulus package out of the House.

It is unacceptable to the more than 100 million American families who are probably still wondering why we are talking about this bill at all.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

STIMULUS PACKAGE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, what we have seen here on the Senate floor this morning is very much in keeping with what has happened in the last 7 years with the Bush administration. The Bush administration is Orwellian. It says something that means something else. The President comes to town and wants to be a "uniter" and not a divider. The American people know how disingenuous that has been.

The President had the ceremony on an aircraft carrier. He had his flight suit on, with a big banner up saying "Mission Accomplished." That was almost 5 years ago. Since that time, 3,000 American soldiers have been killed, and more than 20,000 have been wounded. Is that Orwellian? I think so.

What has taken place here on the Senate floor today is in keeping with this Bush situation.

By the way, the Bush White House—for the first time in more than 130 years—has someone working in the White House who is indicted and convicted of a crime. The same White House had someone in charge of budgeting and taking care of Government contracts who is now in prison, Mr. Safavian. This is the same President who presided over a House majority leader who had two ethics convictions. What did he do to avoid any penalties? He changed the rules in the House until he was indicted by the State of Texas. Now, a number of House Members' staff who dealt with that are in prison, and others are planning on going there.

Mr. President, what we have heard today here on the Senate floor is as Orwellian as anything could be. Two weeks ago, the House passed a bipartisan bill. Sure, they did. They sent it over here for us. Under the Constitution, we have an obligation to consider that. It is an insult to the bipartisan bill that came out of the Senate Finance Committee to call this matter which is now before the Senate "Senators' pet projects."

We have millions of people who are out of work and others who are looking at being out of work. We have in our

bill a "pet project" calling for extending unemployment benefits. That is our "pet project." I have to stand accused, and I am guilty of that because I support that.

As we speak, we have some people—even though in Washington it is fairly warm and the low last night was 41, other people are cold. We have a "pet project" in the bill dealing with giving them assistance so they can pay their heating bills. They will spend that money very quickly.

We have another "pet project" that was supported on a bipartisan basis in the bill to give homeowners relief. One of the "pet projects" in this bill was talked about by the President in his State of the Union Message. When we heard him say it, we all knew he probably didn't really mean it, but he talked about doing something to refinance homes that are in default. We took the President's word, and one of our "pet projects" is what the President wanted and which is in this Senate stimulus package.

To talk about the timely nature of this, a rebate check, even under the most generous timeframe, cannot come until after the income tax returns are filed in April of this year. So we are moving this as quickly as we should.

One of the "pet projects" we have in this bill is to take care of about 250,000 disabled veterans—American veterans who, in the course of their duties serving this country, have become disabled. We, as one of our "pet projects," decided it would be nice—if everyone else was getting a rebate check, shouldn't a disabled veteran get one? So that is a "pet project." I support it, and I think it is very important.

One of the "pet projects" we support—and I think there is bipartisan support for it—is to take care of 21.5 million seniors who, with the House-passed bill, get a big goose egg—nothing. I have not criticized the House bill. It was a good start. But even Speaker PELOSI, my dear friend, recognizes that what they did is inadequate and that what we are going to do is much better. We are going to give 21.5 million seniors a rebate. What does that mean? They will spend it and stimulate the economy.

Mr. President, to say they need time to read this gargantuan bill we have—it was best summarized by the Senator from California; she did it last night. Senator BOXER brought to the Senate floor the addition to the bill that they are still reading. It is a page and a half long. So we have had 12 to 14 hours; they could have read two or three words an hour and gotten through that.

Today, we should be able to finish the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act legislation and have a time set for tomorrow to finish the vote on the stimulus package. Sixty votes is all we want. There are 51 Democrats, and everyone will vote for this. It is the House package with those "pet projects" that take care of seniors, disabled veterans, and a few other people

where we feel it is important, especially the unemployed people who are desperate for another check and are trying to find a job.

Mr. President, the Orwellian Bush administration has now slopped over into the Senate, and now the Republican leader is becoming Orwellian himself.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the first half of the time under the control of the Republican leader or his designee and the second half of the time under control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from California.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak on the Democrats' time to pay tribute to Marine Cpl Sean Andrew Stokes. I thank Senator KYL for agreeing to this request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL SEAN ANDREW STOKES

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, tomorrow, Wednesday, February 6, at Camp Pendleton in my home State of California, one of the true heroes of our country will receive a rare and distinguished honor. On what would have been his 25th birthday, Marine Cpl Sean Andrew Stokes—and I show you that beautiful face in this picture—will be awarded the Silver Star for heroic actions performed in the line of duty during Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah, Iraq.

From November 9 through November 18 of 2004, then-Private Stokes took the position of "point" in his platoon. That means he was the first Marine to enter a building and the first Marine to encounter whatever and whoever was inside. Bullets, grenades, and rockets were around every corner. For 9 days and nights, Sean fought insurgents in hand-to-hand combat, in house after house, in building after building.

Most of us would lose our sanity in such a place, but Sean kept his sanity with a simple prayer of thanks after coming out of each house alive.

Word of Sean's actions over those days quickly spread. The History Chan-

nel made a documentary about the battle of Fallujah, and Sean's heroic actions were prominently featured.

Embedded in Sean's platoon was Pat O'Donnell, a historian who wrote a critically acclaimed book, "We Were One: Shoulder to Shoulder with the Marines Who Took Fallujah." Mr. O'Donnell has said Sean hid his wounds on more than one occasion so he could stay with his Marine brothers rather than take the mandatory medical evacuation. He said:

Sean always put others first before himself.

Sean will be receiving the Silver Star tomorrow for his actions on his first tour. His father Gary conducted research, and as best as he can tell, Sean is the first Marine to be awarded the Silver Star for actions while a private since two Marine privates received such an honor during the Vietnam war.

In September 2005, Sean returned to Iraq, once again at the front of his platoon, where he distinguished himself and was eventually promoted to corporal.

Sean could have left the Marine Corps at the end of that tour. His father urged him to get out, but Sean said: What about everybody else? He felt the need to stick by his buddies who had stood by his side every single day in Iraq.

In April of 2007, Sean went back for his third deployment. Sean's father wrote:

He went back to Iraq to protect his best friend, Bradley Adams, and because he wanted to be a Marine more than anything else in life.

Sean, along with Bradley, was assigned to the battalion commander's personal security detachment, a position reserved for elite and combat-seasoned warriors. The two managed to eventually maneuver their way into the lead vehicle, once again taking point, which earned Sean the nickname "Pathfinder."

That battalion commander told Gary Stokes his son had saved his life on numerous occasions, including on July 30, 2007, the day Sean Stokes died from an improvised explosive device attack while on patrol in Al Anbar Province.

Over 820 men and women who were either from California or based in California have died in Iraq. This young and heroic Marine is one of them.

Sean Stokes represented the best of the Marine Corps, the best of the United States, the best of California. He was born 25 years ago Wednesday in Fremont, CA. He grew up in the gold country of California in the town of Auburn.

He was into cars and his dad says he had lots of them. When he returned from his first tour in Iraq, the people of Auburn learned he wanted to fix up his Honda Prelude, so they, the people of the town, put on some new rims, spruced it up, and made it look good—all free of charge—for Sean.

He attended Bear River High School, where he played linebacker on the foot-

ball team and the outfield on the baseball team.

Upon learning that Sean died, Bear River retired his No. 51 football jersey, the first time the school has ever retired a number.

Of his baseball ability, Sean's dad draws a parallel to a great home-run hitter also born on Wednesday—Babe Ruth. He said it is no coincidence that he was the only kid on the all-star team to hit the ball out of Babe Ruth Baseball Park onto the nearby road, not once but three times.

Sean's dad also says he was quite popular and had lots of girlfriends. But he had found true love and was engaged to Nicole Besier, a beautiful young girl who is also a Marine.

Gary Stokes wrote to me about his son:

Sean turned out to be a great fisherman and from the time he was a little guy, he loved to fish. I remember taking Sean camping, and that is all he wanted to do the entire time during our camping trips and other outings and vacations. Even though I understand that the Tigris River was polluted and at times surrounded by terrorists, I would be surprised if Sean did not throw in a fishing line a few times during one of his three tours in Iraq.

"Sean, like his brother Kevin, is a great son," his father writes. We do have a photo, I believe, of Kevin. We are going to get out the photo to show the brothers together.

Sean, like his brother Kevin, is a great son, and we always would make sure to make time to do fun things together as much as possible, like golf, fishing, or camping.

This is a picture of Sean and his brother.

His father continues:

Sean and I made the commitment years ago to not be like the father and son in the song "Cats in the Cradle." Sean has touched many lives during his short life and he was loved and was respected by everyone whom he met.

Sean's life was short, but it was full and he always gave it his all in everything he did.

Tomorrow's ceremony at Camp Pendleton honors the heroism and the bravery of Sean Stokes. Similar to the other Marines out at Camp Pendleton and the rest of the men and women in uniform around the world, he volunteered to carry the burden of protecting our beloved Nation.

He fought for the man next to him and for the troops behind him, and he died in service to them. We owe him our gratitude. And we owe his family our gratitude and we owe the families of all the men and women who serve in harm's way our gratitude. We can never forget what they have sacrificed.

I conclude as the Senator from California, we have lost so many. As a mother, as a grandmother, I will do everything, along with my colleagues, to bring our troops home and to spare others the deep grief this family has endured.

I again thank Senator KYL for his graciousness in allowing me to have this opportunity to pay tribute to Sean.